

# NEW HORIZONS

= in the ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH =

**5** Confessions of a Sabbath-  
Breaker // by *Larry E. Wilson*

December 2018

**22** Review: Aimee Byrd's *Why  
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## CHRISTMAS CONVERSATIONS



DANIEL P. CLIFFORD // 3

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Mt. Carmel Church, Somerset, New Jersey, marked her fortieth anniversary on September 15, 2018, with a celebration service and an excellent luncheon. Rev. Gregory Pilato, pastor of Mt. Carmel Church, was master of ceremonies. Rev. Keith Graham, of sister church Grace OPC in Westfield, New Jersey, preached from Psalm 138. May God continue to use Mt. Carmel Church to shine the light of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in central New Jersey and beyond.



# CHRISTMAS CONVERSATIONS



**DANIEL P. CLIFFORD // We are facing the end of dialogue. At least, it can seem that way in our polarized society. Disagreement has sharpened, and healthy debate diminished. Who isn't angry about cultural issues and political developments? Too irritated to consider other viewpoints, many are turning instead to social media**

or news outlets that support their own positions. This tense atmosphere makes gospel communication difficult. And, of course, another significant communication barrier is simply religious ignorance. We can no longer assume that our neighbors are familiar with Scripture and Christ. As we lose these points of contact, spiritual conversations become more challenging.

## **A Remaining Touchpoint**

At this time of year, however, we are reminded of one touchpoint that remains. Christmas is, or involves, a bit of residual Christianity in our social fabric. It will likely keep its place for some time because people enjoy Christmas. It offers not only gifts and food, but the chance to reconnect and remember what is important—an often nostalgic sentiment expressed in productions from *It's a Wonderful Life* to *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. The day feels meaningful to people with or without a trip to church.

Retailers also help to perpetuate the importance of December 25. According to them, that's our shop-

ping deadline! They have an interest in keeping Christmas a distinct part of the "happy holidays." Crèches or cards with nativity scenes, perhaps with carols playing in the background, all help to keep the story of Christ's birth in people's minds. (Maybe the commercialization of Christmas has an upside.)

## **A Gospel Summary**

We can be grateful that a basic knowledge of Jesus's birth remains in our culture because the nativity puts the great themes of the gospel on display. As God introduces his Son to the world, he also lays out major motifs of redemption.

*God's plan* certainly stands out in Bethlehem. The onlookers rejoice that the child comes as the Savior God promised (Luke 2:11) who will save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). We commemorate other famous births *because* of achievements—think of Presidents' Day or Martin Luther King Day. But Jesus's birth is celebrated *before* his achievements, because he comes in fulfillment of God's plan to save us.

It even seems that God prepared

creation for the moment of incarnation, like a glove is prepared for a hand. Theologian Herman Bavinck observes that, by making man in his image, God set the stage for his Son to assume and redeem human nature: "The creation of humans in God's image is a supposition and preparation for the incarnation of God" (*Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:277). Along similar lines, B. B. Warfield writes that "the incarnation was contemplated and provided for in creation itself" (*Selected Shorter Writings*, 1:145). God made mankind in a way that fit with his foreordaining, not just the fall of humanity, but its recovery in Christ. Christmas brings God's deeply-laid, gracious plan to light.

*God's love* clearly stands out in the Christmas story. John 3:16 famously pegs Jesus's coming to God's goodwill: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son." What an overture to a lost world! How fitting that Jewish shepherds and Gentile wise men would agree in worshiping Jesus! God's people of every nation receive the Savior as an expression of God's love.

*The cross* gets foreshadowed in this

lowly birth. Christmas cards typically show an idealized stable scene—clean and cozy, almost better than the maternity ward. But the truth is that only a poor and connectionless family would have been driven to such an extremity. These humbling circumstances fit with Jesus’s mission to take our sufferings and death upon himself. The manger points to the cross.

A *glorified humanity* is also strongly implied by Jesus’s birth. He takes our nature, intending to display God’s greatness (John 1:14, 18). Along these lines, the church father Athanasius reflected that the body of Christ was bound to become glorious “when the Word had once descended upon it” (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 4:53). If God takes our nature, does he not also intend to “advance” our nature (Larger Catechism Q. 39)? Indeed, he does. It was God’s intention to raise up Christ in glory and cause us to bear his image (1 Cor. 15:49).

Finally, notice that God’s overture to a fallen world comes with *great gentleness*. He sends his Son clothed in the weakest of weak humanity—a baby. God chooses to introduce Christ in a way that puts his mercy in the foreground rather than his judgment. This sets the tone for the gospel age. “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:17). How gently God presents his Son to the world!

We need to bring this light of Scripture to bear on important issues, and Christmas might be an excellent opportunity. As you anticipate this year’s holiday season with family and friends, consider how the events at Jesus’s birth relate to some current discussions.

### Christmas and Identity

Many current cultural controversies have to do with identity—specifically, people’s right to *determine who they are*. The widespread belief is that we can make and remake our identity, even up to the point of choosing our own gender. This is hyper-Romanticism, a deification of feelings and desires. It sees

inhibition, not sin, as humanity’s great problem. Roles imposed by religion or society are straitjackets; we need to shed our inhibitions, discover our true identity, and let it go!

But Christianity sees mankind as created to glorify God, which makes obedience to God the path of greatest fulfillment. The incarnation illustrates this. Christ’s coming is a deed, not of radical independence, but of radical submission. He carries out the role God assigns him, from his lowly birth in a stable to his painful death on the cross, where he takes the penalty for self-willed people like us. Christ stays in this role even though, facing death, he wished it could change: “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Self-willed people like us need Jesus’s sacrifice. We also need his Holy Spirit to change our hearts and give us strength to find our freedom in being faithful to the sometimes difficult roles that he has assigned to us—whether it be the calling of a Christian, the duty of a husband, wife, or single person, or the created roles of man and woman. Christmas illustrates how we find blessing and true freedom through submission to God’s plan.

### Christmas and Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness is a buzzword. Many people passionately feel that no group should be marginalized, that everyone should welcome and accept everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

Christians of course agree that people should be treated with respect. The Christmas story, for instance, implicitly condemns the marginalization of Jesus’s poor, connectionless family. Yet as Christians, we aim for something higher than toleration. We want what is best for people. Mankind needs righteousness, unity, and the experience of God’s love. The events in Bethlehem show how God’s love in Christ brings people together at a deep level, beyond mere inclusiveness. Poor Jewish shepherds and rich foreign wise men all

come to worship the Savior. As they unite around Christ, they are forgiven and set free based on his finished work. They are truly accepted—by God. Because Christ teaches us to respect others made in God’s image, Christian or not, Christianity delivers a principled valuing of all people God has made.

### Christmas and Politics

Polarized speech has exploded as the culture wars are played out in the political arena. The battles are ferocious and even the observance of Christmas becomes a political dividing line. Christians are not immune. You may catch yourself noticing whether the card from your distant relative reads “Happy Holidays” or “Merry Christmas” and making assumptions accordingly.

The degree of upset surrounding politics, however, often points to a misplaced hope. People trust a conservative agenda or a progressive agenda to put the world right, and they grow panicky when their ideas come under threat. The Christmas story helps us here, too. The hope of the human race is that God has come to be with us, in Christ. Glory and blessing are assured, not by the policies of the left, right, or center, but because God has taken our nature. This is what the incarnation means.

Again, consider the shepherds and wise men. We can assume that they had different political viewpoints, but they gather to Christ and are equally forgiven and united in him. It’s the same Christ who equips us to be peacemakers and to be kind to one another—even the annoying people who watch the wrong newscast!

Remember that Christ was born in politically turbulent times. He came to a largely pagan world, a world full of dashed hopes. But he brought salvation, unity, and true hope by his presence. And he still does. May the Lord give us insight into the hope of Jesus’s incarnation, together with the opportunity and willingness to articulate it to people who need to hear. □

*The author is pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Vienna, Virginia.*

# CONFESSIONS OF A SABBATH-BREAKER



LARRY E. WILSON // Years ago at a church I served, the Lord did a noticeable work of grace during our evening worship. After the service, which included Communion, people talked for a long time—even longer than normal. And it wasn't just idle chit-chat, but encouraging, edifying, God-centered Christian fellowship.

The Lord had drawn us closer to himself and to each other through his Supper. It was like a taste of heaven, and no one wanted to leave. Finally, a teenager said, "Let's go get pizza!" So we went, ate together, and kept up our fellowship.

## A Sabbath-Breaker!

I used that evening as a sermon illustration some time later. I was trying to demonstrate to the listeners that our Lord uses his Supper to renew our covenant bond both with himself and with our fellow Christians. I told the story to encourage us to expect that the Lord will use the Supper to impact our relationships.

But, to my dismay, my mention of *where* we ate after the service supplanted my point! Instead of rejoicing that God uses the Supper as a means of grace, many began faulting me for going out to eat on Sunday. The irony was so thick you could cut it with a knife.

I should explain that at the time of that post-church pizza dinner, I was earnestly following a strict list of "don'ts"

to keep the Lord's Day holy. Following the Jewish pattern, our Sabbath lasted from evening to evening. Beginning with supper at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, my family shut off the television, the radio, and all devices—with the exception of playing sacred music. We put away toys and games. We didn't go out to eat, watch or play sports, or do many other things. We strictly observed this until after evening worship (which started at 7:00 p.m.). By the time we went out for pizza, we'd been keeping these strict don'ts for well over twenty-six hours. By our reckoning, the Sabbath was over.

However, I am now convinced that my whole approach at that time fell short. I *had* broken the Sabbath! But not by going out for pizza.

## What Should We Do on the Lord's Day?

It's not uncommon in our Reformed circles to stress what we should *not* do on the Lord's Day. However, after studying the Gospels, it's hard to escape the conclusion that such an approach resembles the Pharisees more

than Jesus. While God framed most of the Ten Commandments in negative terms ("You shall not"), he framed the fourth commandment in positive terms ("Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy"). God emphasizes what we should do. To keep the day holy is not merely to set it apart *from* common days, but to do so in order to actively devote it *to* God and his purposes.

Our Lord gives us a weekly Sabbath to portray, give a taste of, and prepare us for, the eternal Sabbath. (See "A Sign of Hope" by Richard Gaffin, *New Horizons*, March 2003.) He reveals the underlying principle for this in Exodus 20:11, immediately following the command to remember the Sabbath:

For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

The principle is: imitate God. The reason we remember the Sabbath is because we are imitating God. Our Lord Jesus pointed out that he followed this

very principle: “The Jews were persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I am working’” (John 5:16–17). Jesus insisted that he should do on his weekly Sabbath the kind of things his Father does in his everlasting Sabbath.

### How God Keeps the Sabbath

If we, too, are to imitate God, we must ask what kind of things does God do in his everlasting Sabbath—the rest that began at the end of creation and still continues (Heb. 4:1–11). (See “Why on Sunday” by O. Palmer Robertson, *New Horizons*, March 2003.)

First, God has fellowship with his people during his great rest (1 John 1:3). Above all, God calls us to *fellowship with him in worship* on our weekly rest day. He blessed the day and made it “holy” (specially devoted to him). Each Lord’s Day, we ought to draw near to our God as much as we can—in public, family, and secret worship.

Second, he meets with all his redeemed children. Accordingly, he calls us to assemble together each Lord’s Day, not only to worship him but also to *fellowship with each other* (Heb. 10:24–25). Since we belong to Christ, we belong to his body. Each of us not only needs but also is needed by our fellow believers. God uses Christian fellowship to encourage grace and discourage sin in us, which furthers our walk with the Lord.

Third, God rests during his great Sabbath period (Gen. 2:1). God also wants you to *rest and be refreshed* (Deut. 5:14).

Notice that Deuteronomy 5:14 also mentions families and servants. That’s because, fourth, God *gives* rest during his great rest day (that is, he shows mercy). God had already entered his rest when Adam and Eve sinned. Still, he put his whole plan of salvation into action. He keeps showing mercy. That’s why it’s important that we too *show love and mercy* (give rest) to others on the Lord’s Day. As we’ve seen, when Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, he insist-

ed that it was actually he—and not his critics—who was following the principle of imitating God’s Sabbath activity.

A fifth activity God engages in—and therefore we should—is *enjoying his creation* (Gen. 1:31). We should use this enjoyment as a means to remember and enjoy God, not to forget and displace him.

Sixth, during his everlasting rest, God upholds all things by his powerful Word (Heb. 1:3). He does what’s needed to keep his creation from falling into chaos. Likewise, we do well on our weekly rest day to do *works of necessity* to maintain order.

### Keeping the Lord’s Day...Empty?

You see, our God doesn’t give the Lord’s Day just for us to keep it empty. Rather, he gives it so we might fill it with the spiritual rest of enjoying our communion with God in Christ (Mark 2:27). Everyday life tends to overshadow our awareness of our rest in Christ. It tends to eclipse our enjoyment of it. It tends to make us seek the things below. And so our Lord graciously gives us rest stops—oases—on the path to glory.

He gives us the weekly Lord’s Day as an opportunity to seek the things above. That’s why keeping the Lord’s Day holy isn’t mainly a matter of don’ts. Rather, it’s mainly a spiritual activity of positively communing with and delighting in the Lord. If you earnestly dedicate yourself to filling the Sabbath with that kind of rest, then questions about what specific things you may or may not do tend more or less to sort themselves out. And they don’t demand the same answers for every person or every situation.

Maybe it would be helpful to regard doing certain things on the Lord’s Day as sins of omission (neglecting to pursue what we ought to pursue) rather than sins of commission (doing what we ought not to do). When our Lord tells us to stop our work for the day, it’s not because our work is somehow wrong. If it’s not wrong on another day, then it’s not wrong in and of itself on the Lord’s Day. But when you consider God’s purposes for the Lord’s Day, then

you see that your work becomes wrong because it gets in the way of what you should be pursuing instead on that day.

The reason why we should empty the Lord’s Day of everyday things is so we might fill it with heavenly things. When we wonder whether we should or shouldn’t do something on the Lord’s Day, it might help to ask some practical questions: Will doing this help or hinder my embracing the Lord’s Day as a foretaste of the eternal Sabbath? Will doing this help or hinder my delight in the Lord and communing with him in worship? Will doing this help or hinder my pursuit of spiritually edifying fellowship with fellow believers? Will doing this help or hinder my cultivating an awareness that I’m a Christ-following pilgrim on the way to heaven?

Are we committed to treating the Lord’s Day as a “delight” (Isa. 58:13), as “the festive day of rest” (Heidelberg Catechism), as “the market day of the soul” (the Puritans)? Or, could we be breaking the Sabbath by emphasizing *don’ts* and *duty* more than *dos* and *delight*?

In time, the Lord convicted me that, in spite of my rules, I had been breaking the Sabbath. Yes, I’d diligently abstained from many things. But that still left me too much like the Pharisees who drew near to God with their lips while their hearts were far from him (Matt. 15:8–9). I hadn’t really devoted the day to seeking the Lord to commune with and delight in him. I repented. I’ve kept repenting. But, alas, I still fall short.

How liberating it is to know that our God loves and saves sinners! Our Savior’s blood and righteousness cleanses and covers our failure to keep the Sabbath as we ought. The Holy Spirit pours God’s love into our hearts to impart the delight the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have for each other.

How liberating it is to devote the Lord’s Day to delighting in the Lord and his redeemed children—even if imperfectly—by the grace of God in Christ! ◻

*The author is a retired OP minister.*

# READY FOR THE STORM



**TIMOTHY D. HOPPER //** On September 8, six days before Hurricane Florence made landfall on the North Carolina coast, OPC disaster response coordinator David Nakhla got a call from Aaron Dorr, a deacon at Grace Reformed Presbyterian in Des Moines, Iowa. Dorr and his four brothers wanted to know if they could help.

Over the last few years, the Dorr brothers have gained an interest in hurricane response. They outfitted an eighteen-foot trailer with disaster response supplies, including chain saws, trash pumps, generators, and fuel canisters. When they heard about Florence, they were ready to serve OP congregations in the path of the storm.

Dorr told Nakhla that they were eager to arrive on the coast prior to Florence's landfall because, in their experience, flooding and roadblocks make entry into the affected area difficult after the storm has passed through.

David Nakhla immediately connected Dorr with two members of the diaconal committee of the Presbytery of the Southeast (PSE)—ruling elder Mike Cloy and me.

Cloy, who led disaster response efforts while serving in the Army, has assisted the PSE and the OPC Committee on Dia-

conal Ministry with disaster response training, including producing two short videos to help local deacons and presbytery diaconal committees prepare for incidents like hurricanes. By the end of the day on September 9 (five days before landfall), Cloy had identified the churches in the path of the storm and laid out a multi-phase disaster response plan (preparation, assessment, coordination) to the PSE diaconal committee. Cloy and I began contacting the offi-

cers of the churches in Virginia Beach, Virginia; Wilmington, North Carolina; New Bern, North Carolina; and Covenant URC in Pantego, North Carolina. We notified them that the PSE diaconal committee was positioning itself to assist in the wake of the storm and reminded them of the training we provided at the PSE diaconal conferences in 2015 and earlier this year.

We also had a conference call with four of the Dorr brothers, who were in four different states, to discuss their capabilities and intentions. Work on the family farm as young men gave these brothers experience in chain-sawing and other skills needed for disaster response. Cloy and I began making arrangements for them to stay in the building of Trinity Reformed in Wilmington.

Ben Dorr drove straight from Minnesota to Ohio to pick up his brother Chris, and they then drove together to Wilmington



*Disaster response team (left to right) Ben Kitchen, Ben Greer, Alex Dorr, Ethan Dorr, Aaron Dorr, Ben Dorr, and Chris Dorr*

with the trailer of supplies. They left without time to buy food or pack sufficient bedding, so they made a brief stop in Raleigh for those supplies. They arrived in Wilmington early in the morning of September 13, twenty-four hours before landfall.

### Hurricane Florence Hits

At the same time, the elders and deacons from the congregations were busily compiling information on their congregants' plans to weather the storm. About half the church members evacuated, and the remainder stayed in their homes. Cloy and I worked to ensure we had contact information and locations for everyone who was remaining in Wilmington.

As the rain was falling on Friday, September 14, the disaster response team and elder Marc Yandle were able to check on many of the congregants from Heritage OPC in Wilmington, who had sheltered in their homes. This required chainsawing their way through downed trees on the roads. Mercifully, there were no injuries, no significant damage to homes, and no damage to any of the buildings that the churches meet in.

The second wave of our disaster response team wasn't able to leave for the coast until after the storm had begun. Alex Dorr and Ben Kitchen from Covenant Presbyterian in Buford, Georgia, and their friend Ben Greer left Friday and drove into the storm to arrive in Wilmington in the middle of the night.

On Saturday morning, September 15, the crew attempted to travel the ninety miles from Wilmington to New Bern, which was hit harder by Florence, to assess the damage. However, the flooding was too severe, and they had to turn back. That afternoon, the disaster response team checked on several families from Heritage and Trinity Reformed who live outside the city; they were able to use one of their generators to help a farmer save multiple freezers

full of chicken.

The final wave, Aaron and Ethan Dorr, flew from Des Moines to South Carolina on Saturday afternoon. Unable to pass flooded roads in their rental cars, they waited until the team in Wilmington drove out through the flood waters on Sunday morning, September 16, to retrieve them.

The labors continued that day as the team removed trees from the roofs of church members and neighbors of Trinity Reformed. They also pumped 20,000 gallons of water out of the finished basement of ruling elder Greg Bebb's medical office in Wilmington. In New Bern, deacon Scott Cormier and the elders assessed the situation of members of Covenant Presbyterian. One had a flooded rental property. Sev-



*An OP disaster response truck on the scene of flood damage from Hurricane Florence*

eral had trees on their roofs.

On Monday, September 17, the disaster response team began another full day of tree removal around Wilmington. This work was greatly assisted by their foresight to rent a skid steer prior to the storm's arrival; they pulled this behind a truck and used it to move trees that manpower alone could not have moved.

In New Bern, Cormier discovered that one home of a family from the church was completely flooded. We began assembling a team from Covenant Presbyterian and Covenant URC (sixty miles to the north) to start removing wet drywall in that home the follow-

ing day. If drywall is removed quickly enough, mold doesn't have a chance to set in, and there is a good chance that the wood structure of the house will not need to be repaired.

The morning of September 18, the disaster response team made a second attempt to travel to New Bern to assist with tree removal. After several false starts, they found a route around the flooded roads, and began removing downed trees and assisting with demolition in the flooded home. The three men from Georgia headed home the next day, and the four remaining team members stayed in New Bern through Wednesday to cut more trees.

### Skilled Response

We thank the Lord for providing a skilled team who traveled many miles to bless their brethren. Because some team members arrived prior to the storm, they could respond to the disaster even as the storm was bearing down. The development of a response plan by the disaster response team and diaconal committee of the PSE, in conjunction with information from local church officers, allowed us to ensure that each of our church members was accounted for and property damages were assessed once the storm hit. We estimate that the work done by the disaster response team saved

recipients over \$100,000 in tree cutting, driveway and road clearing, tarping, pumping water, and demolition of flooded properties.

The mission of the disaster response efforts of the PSE diaconal committee is to restore corporate worship as soon as possible after a disaster event and to love our neighbors in the communities hit by a disaster. We thank the Lord for faithful church officers and church members serving one another and their neighbors in this time of crisis. □

*The author is chairman of the diaconal committee of the PSE and deacon at Shiloh Presbyterian in Raleigh, North Carolina.*

# CARING FOR MINISTERS IN THE OPC



**MATTHEW MINER //** The Committee on Ministerial Care (CMC) gathered for its August 2018 meeting at Bethel Presbyterian in Wheaton, Illinois. Humbled and honored to be a part of the group—my first time on a denominational committee—I was anticipating some solemn OPC proceedings.

Retired OP pastor and committee president Lendall Smith called the group to order. “A committee,” Smith read from his notes, “is a group of men who individually can do nothing, but who, as a group, can meet and decide that nothing can be done.”

“If you want to kill any idea in the world,” he continued, “get a committee working on it.”

And for a final dose of inspiration: “A camel is a horse designed by a committee.”

As our laughter subsided, Smith read Proverbs 11:14, “Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in the abundance of counselors there is safety.” He charged *this* committee, the CMC, not to take these characterizations of committee work to heart but to see what we could accomplish to help and encourage the ministers of our denomination who face unique needs

because of their pastoral calling.

## The CMC in Fall 2018

Since that August meeting, members of the CMC have been visiting fall presbytery meetings to get the word out about our committee and the services we provide to OP ministers. “You really will have people assist me with my finances for free?” one pastor asked. The answer is yes.

In September, one member worked with Ken Montgomery, pastor of Ge-

neva OPC in Marietta, Georgia, on structuring retirement contributions and the housing allowance portion of his call in a way that would be most helpful to his family. Afterward Montgomery wrote to us:

In seminary, we learned various important dates in church history and were introduced to aspectual nuance in Greek verbs, but we did not spend time studying the details of the IRS tax code as related to pastors!

Thankfully, a member of the CMC was able to give me sound advice and even researched further and sought second opinions to ensure our household and church were complying with regulations. I would recommend that my fellow OPC pastors utilize the resources of the CMC. I am glad GA established this committee for the well-being of our ministers.

*[Continued on page 16]*



Members of the CMC (left to right) Matt Miner, Lendall Smith, Ken Vander Molen, Clark Brooking, Doug Watson, Darren Thole, Dave Vander Ploeg, David Nakhla, Greg De Jong, David Haney

# A GLIMPSE OF LIFE AND MINISTRY IN URUGUAY

// RAYMOND E. CALL III



Raymond Call leading prayer in the new church building of Iglesia Presbiteriana Evangelica de Montevideo

It started out as a bright spring day in Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay. It was the Lord’s Day, and we were filled with excitement as we prepared for our afternoon outreach and evening worship service to commemorate our third anniversary as a church plant. We were expecting visitors from the only other two Presbyterian churches in this small secular republic we call home. Several pastors and a ruling elder were invited to participate in leading the service, and I had prepared a sermon on Titus 2:11–14.

Our outreach event was a kind of open house at our church’s new location. We planned to serve *tortas fritas* (a Uruguayan pastry), hand out balloons, and distribute evangelistic literature including tracts and copies of the Gospels. A couple of our missionary teenagers also set up a table to do face painting for children. The forecast had called for a heavy rainstorm, but when we arrived, the skies were sunny. We put a few tables on the sidewalk just outside our church building. Several church members were rolling out dough in the kitchen for the *tortas fritas*. I was thinking about my sermon. Things seemed to be moving along smoothly.

Then, suddenly, the rainstorm blew in. I was inside the church when I saw several church members scrambling to bring in tables and supplies while others rushed out to help. My wife, Michele, ran to tell me that hordes of people were flocking from the nearby park to find shelter

under the projecting roofs that cover the buildings along our urban street. I quickly stuffed flyers for our event into tracts and grabbed an umbrella, and pastor Mark Richline and I set out to take advantage of this “captive” audience. We split up and distributed our tracts to the crowds. Many politely took a copy, while others staunchly refused.

As I was passing a group of young women who refused the tracts, one called out in Spanish. Referring to herself and her friends, she told me that they were “free.” What could this mean but that people who have rejected religion are free?

I smiled and continued handing out tracts to others. But inwardly I became angry. I began to think things like, “Don’t you know who you’re talking about, lady?” “This is the God of the universe.” “You don’t know anything!” When I passed by the group again on my way back to the church, I blurted out something about how Jesus alone can make us free.

Immediately I felt a sense of conviction that I had done wrong. Why? Because I had fostered a harsh, judgmental attitude that had more to do with my own pride than with God’s calling upon me to reach out to her and love her.



Raymond, Lucas, Michele, AnnaGrace, Christina, Daniel, Peter, John, and Jeremiah Call

## The Real “Walking Dead”

Why do I share this story? For several reasons. This story is a glimpse into what life and ministry is like here in Uruguay. It illustrates that there are lost ones who desperately need the truth and love of Jesus. I am reminded of what Paul said in Ephesians 2:1–3:

And you were dead in the

trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Presumably many of these folks refused the tracts because they had no interest in the Lord and were maybe even hostile toward the faith. I later found out that most had been there as part of a diversity demonstration including support for LGBT issues. People just want to live their lives apart from Christ, denying the truth about who God is and who they are in relation to him. They are the “walking dead”—spiritually dead in their sins and transgressions, not realizing that they will one day stand in judgment before the Lord of the universe.

It is tempting to become angry, and our own pride often gets in the way. There is indeed a sense in which we can have a righteous anger for the dignity of God and against the rebellion of human beings. But we need to be careful, “for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:20) and “for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things” (Rom. 2:1). Though it may be appropriate to recognize that someone is rebellious to the Lord and even be angry about it, we must also maintain a concern for his or her ultimate welfare and be open to how we might best interact with that person in order to share the gospel and call the person to repentance. We must ask the Lord for wisdom, who “gives generously to all” (James 1:5).

### Hard Soil

This story also provides insight into the hardness of the soil here in Uruguay. It is a very secular country. Montevideo is the most secular place in the country. And our new location is in the center of the city, in an area populated by cultural progressives. Many have dismissed the idea that there could be a God, or even if there is, that he would be relevant to them. Many believe that they are better off without God than with him. And like the young woman who called out to me, many believe that they find true freedom apart from Christ rather than from and in him. They do not realize that whoever we serve is a master over us—whether sin or the Lord Jesus:

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? (Rom. 6:16)

There are also many grave misunderstandings about

Christians—some due to real abuses in the past. Because there have been so many money-greedy “Christian” sects from Brazil and other places, many have concluded that the church only wants one’s money. Some even think that any belief in tithing or offering is extreme. They refuse to be a part of that.

Our story also touches a bit on the realities of working with our missionary teammates and with our Uruguayan brothers and sisters. Our anniversary celebration was a great blessing. Several of the church members served with enthusiasm by helping to prepare, cook, invite others, and welcome



Montevideo, population 1.3 million, is one of the most culturally progressive cities in South America.

visitors. The same can be said for the missionaries. Mark Richline reached the diversity demonstration group sheltering from the rain before I did. By the end of it, we headed back to the church together—fellowshipping in the Lord. The worship service itself provided a forum for cooperation in the work of the Lord as six presbyters participated in leading the service. Praise the Lord that he is raising up a Reformed community of believers in Uruguay!

We invite you to rejoice in the work of the Lord and to plead with the Lord for lost souls in Uruguay. Ask the Lord to raise up the spiritually dead to new life in Christ and to build a strong, growing Reformed church that will glorify God and proclaim the excellencies of his grace to the ends of the earth.

*The author is a PCA minister laboring with the OPC Uruguay Mission under a cooperative agreement between the Committee on Foreign Missions (OPC) and the Mission to the World (PCA). For more information on the work in Uruguay, the Call missionary blog may be found at [callmissionaries.org](http://callmissionaries.org).*

## What's New

### // Comings/Goings

**Rev. and Mrs. Raymond E. (Michele) Call III** return to the United States this month to begin a yearlong furlough.

# OPC MINISTERIAL INTERNSHIPS: PAST AND PRESENT

// DANNY E. OLINGER



*Pastor Zachary Simmons with his wife, Annie*

Heeding the apostle’s words in 2 Timothy 2:2, “And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also,” the Subcommittee on Ministerial Training of the Committee on Christian Education oversees Orthodox Presbyterian ministerial internships, providing financial assistance and guidance to churches and interns. Since 2004, the Committee has helped to cosponsor 186 summer internships and 136 yearlong internships at 120 Orthodox Presbyterian congregations.

We give thanks to the Lord for the congregations, pastors, and sessions who have committed themselves to the sacrificial service of helping in this critical training and ministry. We also rejoice that the Lord has provided godly men who have served faithfully as interns in preparation for gospel ministry in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

A total of 101 men who have participated in the program have been ordained and currently serve or have served as OPC pastors, teachers, and evangelists. Among those men are (in alphabetical order) the following:

Robert Canode III  
Jeffrey Carter  
Christopher Cashen  
Christopher Chelpka  
Louis Cloete  
Matthew Cole  
Adrian Crum  
Jonathan Cruse  
Bryan Dage  
Scott Davenport  
David DeRienzo  
Daniel Doleys  
Geoffrey Downey  
Alan Dueck  
Brent Evans  
Timothy Ferguson  
Matthew Figura  
John Fikkert  
Joseph Fowler  
James Ganzevoort  
Mark Garcia  
Kenneth Golden

David Graves  
Daniel Halley  
Robert Holda  
Jonathan Hutchison  
Lowell Ivey  
Markus Jeromin  
Paul Johnson  
Jeremy Jones  
James Jordan  
John Keegan  
Jason Kirklin  
David Koenig  
Darryl Kretschmer  
James La Belle  
Nicholas Lammé  
David Landow  
Jeremy Logan  
Joshua Lyon  
Brett Mahlen  
Timothy McClymonds  
C. Steven McDaniel  
Joshua McKamy  
Kevin Medcalf  
Andrew Miller  
Benjamin Miller  
Curtis Moleterno  
Jeremiah Montgomery  
Ken Montgomery  
Andrew Moody  
Jody Morris  
Charles Muether  
Chad Mullinix  
Michael Myers  
Matthew Patton  
Bradley Peppo  
Matthew Prather

Andrew Adcock  
Ethan Allison  
Miller Ansell  
Jeremy Baker  
Andrew Barshinger  
Shane Bennett  
Casey Bessette  
Timothy Black  
Jeremy Boothby  
Michael Borg  
Stephen Brown  
Camden Bucey  
Christopher Bush



*Pastor Adrian Crum with his wife, Rachel*

Roth Reason  
David Robbins  
M. Justin Rosser  
J. Mark Sallade  
Jeffrey Scott  
John Sharpe  
John Shaw  
Micah Shin  
Jonathan Shishko  
Zachary Simmons  
Cecil Simpson III  
David Smiley

Caleb Smith  
Mark Soud  
Matthew Stephan  
Benjamin Swinburnson  
Nathan Tomlinson  
Joseph Troutman  
Francis VanDelden  
Wayne Veenstra  
Clarence Veld  
Charles Williams  
Z. Bulut Yasar

For those OP congregations interested in participating in the 2019 internship program, applications can be found on OPC.org under Christian Education ([www.opc.org/cce/intern.html](http://www.opc.org/cce/intern.html)). A mentoring pastor must have five years of pastoral experience in the OPC. The Committee anticipates being able to provide up to \$1,200 per month in matching support for summer interns and \$1,415 per month in matching support for yearlong interns.

Applications can be sent to the Reverend Danny E. Olinger, Intern Director, 607 N. Easton Road, Building E, Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, 19090 or via email at [danny.olinger@opc.org](mailto:danny.olinger@opc.org). The application deadline is February 28, 2019.

*The author is general secretary for the Committee on Christian Education.*

## Position Available

**Director of Finance:** Currently seeking applicant with accounting degree or equivalent experience to direct and manage the design, development, and operation of a centralized accounting system for all denominational agencies of the OPC. This position includes financial management and reporting, payroll, and human resource management. Applicant should have an understanding of nonprofit fund accounting, as well as experience with accounting software. A CPA designation, membership in a NAPARC member church, and familiarity with the OPC are desirable. This is a full-time position including a comprehensive benefit package. Resumes should be directed to:

Committee on Coordination  
c/o John Shaw  
607 N. Easton Road, Building E  
Willow Grove, PA 19090  
or [John.Shaw@opc.org](mailto:John.Shaw@opc.org)

## OUR MEMBERSHIP VOWS

### Changing Our Status and Nature

*Glen J. Clary*

The fourth membership vow of the OPC reads:

Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise that, in reliance on the grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?

When Adam sinned against God by eating the forbidden fruit, he experienced two changes. His status changed, and his nature changed. His status changed from innocent to guilty. "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God" (Shorter Catechism Q. 14). When Adam sinned, he became guilty of transgression of the law of God. Adam stood before the judgment seat of God as a guilty, unrighteous law-breaker. That was his status after the Fall.

The Fall, however, also changed Adam's nature from holy to sinful. His nature was no longer pure and holy, but defiled and corrupted by sin. After the Fall, his heart desired to sin. In fact, he loved sin, and he no longer had any desire to do good. He became totally depraved. His mind, will, emotions, thoughts, and desires were corrupted by sin (see Gen. 6:5; Rom. 3:10–12).

Since Adam represented all humanity, his sin not only changed him; it also changed us. Indeed, it changed us in the same way that it changed him. It changed our status and our nature. Like Adam, we are both guilty of sin and corrupted by sin. We are born with a guilty status and a sinful nature because of the Fall.

The good news is that the Lord Jesus Christ came to save us. And the saving work of Christ changes both our status and our nature. That's what justification and sanctification are all about. Justification is a change in our status. Sanctification is a change in our nature.

## Out of the Mouth . . .

I was sitting on the front porch while my boys were doing their morning run in the yard. When my six-year-old came around on his third lap, he said to me, "Daddy, this is vanity and a vexation of spirit!" My seven-year-old added, "Yeah, and it is chasing after wind!"

—Daniel Burns  
Huntsville, AL

*Note: If you have an example of the humorous "wisdom" that can come from children, please send it to the editor.*

# TWO NEW CHURCH PLANTS

// JOHN S. SHAW



Food, fellowship, and hymn-singing with Providence OPC at Lake Lanier, near Cumming, GA

The new mission work in Cumming, Georgia, chose their name, Providence, with a nod to their surprising origins. The Lord had set in motion events that led to the planting of Providence long before the group was ready to make such plans itself.

As newlyweds, Kevin and Rachel Medcalf worshiped in a Reformed church in Buford, Georgia, under the faithful ministry of its pastor, Chris Strevel. They cut their teeth on sound doctrine and Reformed church life there. When Kevin began attending Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary with the goal of ordination, the Medcalfs hoped one day to serve in a congregation much like their home church.

In fall 2017, after Kevin had served OP churches in South Carolina and California, he and Rachel made plans to return to Cumming, Georgia, only twenty-five minutes from their old stomping grounds in Buford. Driving across the country to their new home and unsure of his next position, Medcalf got a phone call. Lowell Ivey, an OP church planter in Virginia Beach, had no idea where the Medcalfs were headed or why—he simply wanted to update Kevin on opportunities in their presbytery. There’s a new OP church plant starting up in a town called Cumming, Ivey said. And, by the way, the pastor of its parent church is a guy named Chris Strevel.

This was certainly a work of providence! We serve a God “who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20). He answers prayers in ways that we don’t even know to ask. As the Medcalfs worshiped under the leading of Strevel, God was preparing Cumming’s church planter more than ten years before a church plant was even considered. He does indeed move in mysterious ways.

## Providence’s Priorities

Most of the families that make up the core of Providence OPC have long histories in Reformed churches and have

thought deeply about what should characterize a biblical, Reformed church. Together, they have committed to a few priorities.

*Joyful, excellent worship:* The Lord has provided to this group many skilled musicians and a love for singing. The whole congregation participates in weekly worship, and they sing with vigor.

*Faithful gospel witness to their neighbors:* Medcalf describes their approach to evangelism as “casting a net broadly.” They look for avenues to communicate their presence, including recent ads on electronic billboards across the region and sharing material about the church at a Fourth of July festival. Mostly, though, they are committed as a congregation to speaking with their neighbors and inviting them to church, and some of those invitations have led to new visitors. Simple but effective.

*Warm fellowship that encourages deepening relationships:* The congregation loves each other and enjoys spending time together. They also appreciate opportunities to welcome new folks into their homes and times of fellowship.

*Sound preaching and teaching:* In addition to a commitment to solid biblical preaching, there are multiple opportunities for instruction—evangelism training, Bible studies, a gospel grammar course for the youth, and a marriage study.

The Lord has already done wonderful things at Providence since the Medcalfs arrived this year.

Recently, a new believer came who had just moved from New York. A single woman in a new state, she was ready for the warm fellowship of these Christian families. They have welcomed her into their homes and their lives, and she has enjoyed the solid teaching and vibrant worship of this young mission work. She found a new family and home in Georgia and has experienced the joy of Christian fellowship.

The Lord has also blessed the church with a new location in the local public middle school. When Medcalf visited the school, the Lord opened his eyes to the large mission field within those walls. After connecting with a staff person who

is also a Christian, Kevin learned about opportunities to serve at the school. In October, he began to volunteer as a student mentor in the middle school. Now the church is considering other opportunities to serve the families and the staff of the school. They are committed to love the school and build relationships with their neighbors there.

Providence OPC has enjoyed a good beginning in 2018, growing from the seeds that the Lord planted years before. Pray for their gospel witness, that simple opportunities to meet and serve their neighbors would lead to lasting fruit. And pray that through vibrant worship, witness, warm fellowship, and Bible teaching, the Lord would build a strong church in Cumming.

### Gospel Enthusiasm in Merrillville

Four years ago, a new group in Indiana began meeting for Bible study and worship in the area of Crown Point and Merrillville under the faithful leadership of Glenn Jerrell. Situated in a county of 500,000 people on the outskirts of Chicagoland, they saw many opportunities for gospel witness. Over those four years, they prayed, studied, worshiped, and gathered resources to call a church planter. This spring, the presbytery called Ryan Cavanaugh.

Cavanaugh moved his young family of four from Texas, where he was working for a real estate company, and was ordained as the evangelist for Mission Church in Merrillville in June.

Cavanaugh was raised in California and attended a charismatic Bible college in Texas, guitar in hand, for training as a worship leader. In his own words, Cavanaugh believed that “he could heal cancer through the ministry of his guitar.” At college, however, Cavanaugh was convicted that the Lord saves sinners from lasting death through the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 10:14–17).

He set his sights on preaching and missions, met his wife, Rochelle, and together they gradually came to see the Reformed theology that is woven throughout the Scriptures. The Lord led them to Westminster Seminary in California to continue his training for ministry.

The Lord has gifted Cavanaugh with energy and enthusiasm. He loves the Word of God and he loves people, both

necessary gifts to serve as a minister and “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5). He takes those evangelistic gifts home with him, quickly meeting neighbors and inviting them to Sunday worship and Bible studies. And the Lord has blessed those interactions.

Now at Merrillville, Cavanaugh summed up the church’s ministry goals as “learning to love each other well within the church, so that we will be ready to love others, and learning to speak to each other in grace, truth, and love, so that we will be ready to speak to others with the same grace, truth, and love.”

So how are those goals taking root in the life of Mission Church?

Over the summer, Cavanaugh led Sunday School classes on hospitality and how to be welcoming. Now he leads a class based on Paul Tripp’s book *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*. Both classes were chosen to serve the ministry goals of loving others and speaking grace and truth to others.

Already the families in the church are learning how to invite new families into the life of the church and the lives of members.

When a new family visited the church after the husband spent time with Cavanaugh at a local gathering, other men in the church invited the husband to join them for a planned outing.

When a different family visited for two Sundays but missed the Cavanaughs each time because they were away, Ryan began communicating with them by email before meeting them in person. The church family sent cards and encouragement when the wife spent time in the hospital. Another man visited the church for the first time at the end of June, and he was a warmly welcomed guest at a July 4 gathering hosted by a church family.

Over the next months, Mission Church will begin a variety of advertising and marketing initiatives, but that is built on having first learned how to welcome the visitors who come. More important than simply making their name and presence known, they are ready to love and serve their neighbors while speaking the truth of God’s grace and love displayed through the work of Jesus Christ.

Pray that the Lord will continue to send visitors to Mission Church, and that the families of the mission work will love people well. Pray for deepening relationships with neighbors that will bring lasting gospel fruit. And pray for an ability to speak clearly the good news of what Jesus Christ has accomplished for sinners who trust in him.

*The author is general secretary of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension.*



*A warm welcome to Mission Church*

### Home Missions Today

For up-to-date Home Missions news and prayer updates, e-mail [HomeMissionsToday@opc.org](mailto:HomeMissionsToday@opc.org).  
New editions: December 12, 26.

[Continued from page 9]

## Formation of the CMC

The committee was established by the general assembly in 2017, but its first iteration was back in 2014 as the Temporary Committee to Study the Care for the Ministers of the Church. In God's gracious providence, a great deal has been accomplished since that time—and the committee's name has become more concise! Initial membership included David Haney, Lendall Smith, David Vander Ploeg, Doug Watson, and David Winslow Jr. This group was asked to “investigate needs of OPC ministers and suggest ways [to provide or enhance care for these men and their widows] during all phases of ministry.”

The study committee worked throughout 2015 and 2016, considering two main approaches for the future. First, they considered expanding the roles of the standing committees whose work touches on aspects of ministerial care: the Committee on Diaconal Ministries, the Committee on Pensions, the Committee on Christian Education, and the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension. However, after wrestling with the problem, the study committee determined that the wide range of work would be hard to fit into the existing committee structure.

The second idea was a single, new committee, with a mandate to handle all areas of ministerial care. The study committee concluded that this would be the best way forward, and so in 2016 they asked the Eighty-Third General Assembly to approve the establishment of a Committee on Ministerial Care and to propose to the Eighty-Fourth General Assembly a change in its standing rules so that the Committee on Ministerial Care could replace the Committee on Pensions. The CMC would consist of nine ordained minis-

ters, ruling elders, or deacons, with “the purpose...to provide financial direction and ministries of encouragement and support to ministers of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.” The assembly ratified this plan, and the Committee on Ministerial Care was born; its inaugural meeting was held July 5, 2017.

Since 2017, the CMC has pursued its mission, to care for ministers of the OPC, by building on the foundation laid by the historic Committee on Pensions and by the work done for pastors by the Committee on Diaconal Ministries.

## The CMC's Structure

The CMC accomplishes its work through three subcommittees: Investment & Finance, Pastoral Care, and Resource Development.

First, the Investment & Finance Subcommittee provides fiduciary oversight of the OPC Retirement Fund, which seeks to ensure that OPC ministers have access to an excellent retirement plan. The OPC's plan is called a 403(b), similar to a private-sector 401(k), in which ministers and their

makes gifts to retired OP pastors, who often respond with notes of doxology like this one from George Cottenden: “The Obadiah Fund gift is again a wonderful reminder of the glorious doctrine of the communion of the saints. We are thankful for it and for the praise to our Savior that results from it.”

Second, the Pastoral Care Subcommittee assists ministers with practical needs through counsel and/or diaconal help, including help with financial planning and insurance needs. The subcommittee seeks to address ministers' diaconal needs at the denominational level, as well as to help presbyteries and sessions consider ways of caring for ministers—including their emotional and spiritual well-being—through mentoring programs, counseling, retreats, and sabbaticals.

Third, the Resource Development Subcommittee seeks to provide educational and denominational resources pertinent to ministerial care. The goal is that these resources will be helpful to ministers, as well as to sessions and presbyteries wishing to provide their ministers with support and encouragement.

For example, this subcommittee is developing an interactive salary tool that provides insight about whether the terms of a call will be adequate to meet the pastor's expected financial needs, given his family size, local factors like housing cost, and other specific needs the minister's family has.

Ministers who would like to get in touch with the committee can email David Haney at david.haney@opc.org.

May the Lord grant that our pastors be free from worldly care to devote themselves to the ministry of Word, sacrament, and prayer on behalf of Christ's church!

*The author is a ruling elder at Pilgrim OPC in Raleigh, North Carolina, and a fiduciary planner.*



Lendall Smith and David Haney at a Kane County Cougars game, which the CMC members attended after their meeting—thanks to a generous donor

sessions can choose to defer a portion of their compensation. Then, those dollars can grow to help provide for ministers in their retirement.

The OPC Obadiah Fund for retired ministers and their widows is now administered by the Investment and Finance Subcommittee of the CMC. (You can learn more about the Obadiah Fund and how it's used in “Remember Your Leaders,” *New Horizons*, January 2013.) The Obadiah Fund regularly

# DECEMBER



The Graves



The Crums

**1** **DAVID AND REBEKAH GRAVES**, Coeur d'Alene, ID. Pray that God would maintain the peace, purity, and unity of Coeur d'Alene Reformed Church. / Pray for those planning the April 2019 **TIMOTHY CONFERENCE**.

**2** **BEN AND MELANIE WESTERVELD**, Quebec, Canada. Pray for wisdom and energy to manage many ministry demands. / Pray for **LACY (DEBBIE) ANDREWS**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Southeast.

**3** Affiliated missionaries **JERRY AND MARILYN FARNIK**, Prague, Czech Republic. Pray for fruitful relationships from their English classes. / Pray for **MARK STUMPF**, administrator for the OPC Loan Fund and the CMC.

**4** **MATT AND ELIN PRATHER**, Corona, CA. Pray for evangelism opportunities and hearts prepared for the gospel. / Pray for Christian Education general secretary **DANNY OLINGER** as he directs the Intern Program and MTIOPC.

**5** Pray that **NEW HORIZONS** and **ORDAINED SERVANT** will edify the church and help it communicate its message to others. / **NATHAN (ANNA) STROM**, church-planting intern, Immanuel OPC, Andover, MN.

**6** Associate missionaries **OCTAVIUS AND MARIE DELFELS**, Haiti. Pray for the planning meeting for the formation of a presbytery. / Praise the Lord for the generosity of the OPC expressed in this year's **THANK OFFERING!**

**7** **BEN AND HEATHER HOPP**, Haiti. Pray for the meeting of three Reformed mission groups this month. / **MICHAEL AND NAOMI SCHOUT**, Zeeland, MI. Pray for the East Zeeland church plant as they recently began receiving denominational field support.

**8** Home Missions associate general secretary **AL TRICARICO**. / Retired missionaries **BETTY ANDREWS, CAL AND EDIE CUMMINGS, GREET RIETKERK, YOUNG AND MARY LOU SON**, and **BRIAN AND DOROTHY WINGARD**.

**9** **MARK AND JENI RICHLINE** and **RAY AND MICHELE CALL**, Montevideo, Uruguay. Pray for the pastoral work of the mission as the Calls return to the United States for furlough. / **CHARLENE TIPTON**, database coordinator.

**10** **JEREMY AND GWEN BAKER**, Yuma, AZ. Pray for faithfulness in building relationships with friends and neighbors so that Yuma OPC may share the gospel. / Pray for language acquisition of missionary associates **MARKUS AND SHARON JEROMIN** and **MICHAELA SHARPSHAIR**, Montevideo, Uruguay.

**11** Pray for **DAVID (JANE) CRUM**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of Southern California. / Pray for stated clerk **ROSS GRAHAM** as he begins preparations for the next general assembly in June 2019.

**12** Foreign Missions general secretary **MARK BUBE** and associate general secretary **DOUGLAS CLAWSON**. / Yearlong intern **ZACH (SANDRA) SIGGINS**, Calvary OPC, Glenside, PA.

**13** Pray for Foreign Missions administrative assistant **LING LEE** and secretary **KATRINA ZARTMAN**. / **BEN (TIFFANY) WARD**, church-planting intern, Christ the King, Naples, FL.

**14** Pray for **NICHOLAS (ROSEMARIE) LAMMÉ**, recently called to serve as an evangelist in Houston, TX. / **MR. AND MRS. S. F.** and **MR. AND MRS. D. K.**, Asia. Pray for them as they give counsel to the team.

**15** Pray for affiliated missionaries **MARK AND LAURA AMBROSE**, Cambodia, as they care for victims of human trafficking. / Rejoice in the second printing of the **TRINITY PSALTER HYMNAL!**

# DECEMBER



The Shames family

**21** Affiliated missionaries **CRAIG AND REE COULBOURNE** and **LINDA KARNER**, Japan. Pray that long-time students in their Bible studies might learn to trust in Jesus. / Yearlong intern **CHRIS BYRD**, Knox OPC, Silver Spring, MD.



The Verdick family

**22** **RON AND CAROL BEABOUT**, Mifflintown, PA. Pray for visitors to Grace and Truth and for opportunities to reach the lost. / **MARK AND CARLA VAN ESSEDELFT**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for the safe arrival of their baby in January.

**23** **JIM AND EVE CASSIDY**, Austin, TX. Pray for God's blessing on the ministry of South Austin Presbyterian as they complete denominational support this month. / **DAVID HANEY**, director of the Committee on Ministerial Care.

**24** **FLIP AND ANNELOES BAARDMAN**, M.D., Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for Anneloes as she helps with the mission's bookkeeping. / **DOUG WATSON**, staff accountant, and **JAN GREGGSON**, assistant to the finance director.

**25** **DAVID AND RASHEL ROBBINS**, Nakaale, Uganda, thank God for signs of spiritual maturity among the young men in the Timothy Discipleship Program. / Home Missions administrative assistant **KATIE STUMPF**.

**26** **KEVIN AND RACHEL MEDCALF**, Cumming, GA. Pray that the Spirit would use Providence to make disciples in Cumming. / **DANIEL AND AMBER DOLEYS**, Springfield, OH. Pray for the Lord's blessing on Living Water OPC as they complete denominational support this month.

**27** Missionary associates **CHRISTOPHER AND CHLOE VERDICK**, Nakaale, Uganda. Pray for a time of rest during their visit in the US. / Yearlong intern **ETHAN (CATHERINE) BOLYARD**, Covenant Community OPC, Taylors, SC.

**28** Pray for **STEVE (JOANIE) DOE**, regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic. / Pray for the OPC and PCA's joint publishing work, **GREAT COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS**, as it produces resources for churches.

**29** **JOSH AND KRISTEN MCKAMY**, Chambersburg, PA. Pray for renewed outreach at Covenant OPC and a good relationship with the school where they meet. / **STEPHEN PRIBBLE**, senior technical associate for OPC.org.

**30** Pray for **CHARLES AND CONNIE JACKSON** and **ERIC AND DIANNA TUININGA**, Mbale, Uganda, as they teach the youth. / Pray for the GA's **SPECIAL COMMITTEE** on Updating the Language of the Doctrinal Standards.

**31** **HEERO AND ANYA HACQUEBORD**, L'viv, Ukraine. Pray for growth and maturity in the church's new members. / **JANET BIRKMANN**, communications coordinator for Short-Term Missions and Disaster Response.

**16** Army chaplains **JEFFREY (JENNIFER) SHAMESS** and **DAVID (JENNA) DERIENZO**. / **RYAN AND ROCHELLE CAVANAUGH**, Merrillville, IN. Pray that Mission Church would find their place in the community and grow in love and fellowship.

**17** Pray for the labors of **MR. AND MRS. M. M.**, **MR. AND MRS. J. M.**, and **T. D.**, Asia. / Pray for OP sessions as they seek to identify young men in their churches for the **TIMOTHY CONFERENCE**.

**18** Pray for missionary associates **E. C.**, **P. F.**, **E. K.**, and **M. S.**, Asia, as they plan this winter's English teaching activities. / Home Missions general secretary **JOHN SHAW**.

**19** Pray for missionary associates **LEAH HOPP**, **ANGELA VOSKUIL**, and **DONALD OWENS**, Nakaale, Uganda. / **GREGORY AND GINGER O'BRIEN**, Downingtown, PA. Pray for continued development in the ministry of this mission work.

**20** **BROCK (JENNIFER) PAVIER**, church-planting intern, Covenant Presbyterian Church, St. Augustine, FL. / **DAVID NAKHLA**, disaster response coordinator. Pray for OP families in NC affected by Hurricane Florence.

# THE SPLENDOR OF SPENDING

// ROBERT P. HARTING

What was life like back in the 1930s? Hard. My dad grew up working in his family's sign-making business, which somehow managed to stay open during the Depression. He remembers my grandfather shining his shoes with shellac instead of shoe polish to save money.

Others, not fortunate enough to have a family business, were out on the streets selling anything they could get their hands on, from apples to ice. Even children would be on sidewalks, calling out to passers-by, like hawkers at a carnival.

## A Deep Thirst

Things were not much different back in Isaiah's day. Merchants hawked their wares in order to grab your attention and turn a dime. But there was one voice that they all yearned to hear: the vendor on the street offering water in their arid land. Water meant everything—it was life itself. “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters” (Isa. 55:1).

The Lord through Isaiah invites us to come to him to quench a thirst which he alone can satisfy. This divine offer that fills our deepest need is urgent and universal. Here is the thirst and the longing that only Christ can satisfy.

Our Lord Jesus echoes and exceeds the prophet Isaiah's invitation with a loud call of his own in John 7:37–38: “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”

Seen from God's perspective, then, thirst can be viewed not as a problem, but as an opportunity. The prophet continues in verse 2, “Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.” By his rich invitation, the Lord through Isaiah once again exposes how costly—but disappointingly unfulfilling—unbelief can be, in whatever way it is pursued. Calvin depicts

our plight as “the madness of men, in rejecting the kindness of God...and yet, harassing themselves greatly about various trifles which cannot yield them any advantage.” When will we have ears to hear?

## The Splendor of Christ's Spent Life

The prophet describes the Lord's offer as “wine and milk without money and without cost” (Isa. 55:1). One might ask, what do buying and spending have to do with the free offer of the gospel? The answer is, everything! As Calvin observes: “How is it possible to buy without a price? . . . Buying denotes figuratively the method by which we procure anything.” Even a child, early on, learns the value of a dollar. So, have you learned the value of your soul? How much will you give in exchange for it? What is it worth to you?

To Christ, it was worth everything. This is what Isaiah has already affirmed in Isaiah 53:5: “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.” Are we thirsty? Are we listening? In order to be filled, you have to be thirsty with the true thirst of sincere repentance and then listen by faith. The price of admission is repentance plus faith plus nothing else.

Here is the splendor of spending which is ultimately the splendor of Christ's sacrifice for us. If you know his love, then you are blessed by the splendor of his divine spending. Not only have you experienced the splendor of his being spent for you, but the prophet promises that you and I now are endowed with splendor, or glory, ourselves: “Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor” (Isa. 55:3).

## The Splendor of Our Spending

Now your life can be spent out in splendor. But how? My grandparents experienced that splendor as they accepted the invitation from their pastor John Clelland to be a part of the new Eastlake OPC in Wilmington, Delaware. At the same time, in Middletown, Delaware, (where I now pastor), Mary and Nellie Rothwell not only spurred on Grace Church to build a new building, but through their bequest provided major funding for the entire denomination's work of spreading the gospel through home missions. As their pastor Robert Graham reflected, “these humble sisters were the spiritual backbone of the church.” That is the splendor of spending, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory!

*The author is pastor of Grace OPC in Middletown, Delaware. He quotes from the NIV-84.*

# NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

## NEW LABORERS IN THE PRESBYTERY OF THE SOUTHWEST

*Mark Sumpter*

At its meeting in late September, the Presbytery of the Southwest welcomed several new laborers, including Rev. Nicholas Lammé and Rev. Miller Ansell.

Previously a member of the Presbytery of the Midwest and recently working in Bible translation in Costa Rica, Nicholas Lammé accepted a call to serve as a disaster response evangelist in ministry related to the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey in Houston. Beginning in November 2018, Lammé will spearhead the ministry of the Word and prayer as well as coordinate hospitality and other practical outreach efforts.

Miller Ansell will serve as Pastor of Outreach and Assimilation at Christ Presbyterian Church of Flower Mound, Texas. In the Lord's good providence, Christ Presbyterian applied to become a member of the OPC back in January 2018. Rev. John Canales has served this congregation—formerly a congregation of the PCA—for around fourteen years. In one evening, Miller Ansell was ordained and installed; John Canales and the elders and deacons took installation vows; and the congregation of Christ Presbyterian was recognized and received as a new OP congregation.



*John Canales (left) and Miller Ansell*



*At the ordination of Peter Bringe (left to right) Mort Whitman, Bruce Stahl, Marcus Serven, Brett Mahlen, Peter Bringe, Ben Snodgrass, Christian McShaffrey, and Kevin Swanson*

## BRINGE ORDAINED AND INSTALLED

On October 9, 2018, Peter Bringe was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Covenant Family Church in Wentzville, Missouri. Kevin Swanson preached from 2 Timothy 3:10–4:5, Benjamin Snodgrass administered the questions, Marcus Serven gave the charge to the minister from Ezekiel 34, and Christian McShaffrey gave the charge to the congregation from 2 Timothy 4:9–22.

## 25 YEARS AT EMMAUS OPC

*Beth Austin*

Emmaus OPC in Fort Collins, Colorado, hosted a banquet in October honoring their pastor, the Reverend Archibald Alexander Allison, for twenty-five years in the ministry. In 1993, Allison and his wife, Kristi, moved to Fort Collins to minister there in a mission work of Trinity OPC. The first worship service was held on July 25, 1993. That September, the Presbytery of the Dakotas sustained his trials for ordination. He was ordained November 7 and installed as a pastor of Trinity OPC to minister in Fort Collins. His father, Sam Allison, a former minister in the Presbytery of the Dakotas, gave the charge at both the ordination and at the twenty-fifth-anniversary banquet.

In addition to faithfully shepherding the Emmaus congregation, Allison has served the denomination in many capacities. For fifteen years, he was clerk of the Presbytery of the Dakotas. He has been on the Committee on Christian Education for twelve years and also serves on the board of Great Commission Publications. He is a longtime commissioner to general assembly and had the honor of serving as moderator in 2015.

The members of Emmaus OPC are



*Archie and Kristi Allison*

blessed to have such a gifted, steadfast pastor and thank the Lord for his faithful ministry to them.

## UPDATE

### CHURCHES

• On October 19, **Omega OPC** in Williamsport, PA, was organized as a separate congregation.

### MINISTERS

• **Carl R. Trueman** resigned as pastor of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Ambler, PA, on July 1, joining Grove City College as a professor of biblical and religious studies.

• **Cecil R. Simpson III** resigned as associate pastor of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Ambler, PA, on September 15.

• **Todd P. Dole**, formerly the pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Norman, OK, was installed as the pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Abilene, TX, on October 5.

• On October 5, **Arthur J. Fox** was installed as pastor of New Hope OPC in Hanford, CA. Fox was previously the pastor of Calvary OPC in Middletown, PA.

• On October 9, **Peter J. Bringe** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Covenant Family Church in Wentzville, MO.

• On October 12, **Ronald L. Beabout** was installed as an evangelist of the Presbytery of Central Pennsylvania to serve as organizing pastor of the mission work Grace and Truth Church in Mifflintown, PA.

• On October 12, **Anthony C. Domanik** was ordained and installed by the Presbytery of the Midwest as a Teacher of the Word, laboring at Chicago Christian High School.

• **Randall A. Bergquist**, formerly the pastor of Emmanuel OPC in Kent, WA, was deposed from the office of minister by the Presbytery of the Northwest on October 16.

• **Andrew T. Adcock**, formerly the organizing pastor (as associate pastor of New



*At the ordination of Tony Domanik: (back row) Mark deRu, Bob Tarullo, Bruce Hollister, John Fry, Marcus Mininger, Barry Allison, Jim Boss, Keith LeMahieu, Brett Mahlen, Kevin Baldwin; (front row) Alan Strange, Tony Domanik, Mark Vander Hart, Ben Snodgrass*

Life OPC in Montoursville, PA) was installed as pastor of Omega OPC in Williamsport, PA, on October 19.

• **Aijalon B. Church** was ordained as a minister and installed as pastor of Covenant OPC in Sinking Spring, PA, on October 19.

• On October 26, **Gregory W. O'Brien**, formerly a PCA minister, was installed as organizing pastor of Downingtown OPC.

• **Todd S. Bordow**, formerly the pastor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Rio Rancho in Rio Rancho, NM, was installed as the pastor of Cornerstone OPC in Jersey Village (northwest Houston), TX, on October 28.

• The Presbytery of Ohio dissolved the pastoral relationship between **R. Daniel Knox** and Grace OPC, Sewickley, PA, upon his retirement on October 31.

songs ... let justice roll on like a river." The worship of God in the time of Amos, as far as we know, had theologically sound music. Nonetheless, God did not want to listen to it because the worshipers couldn't care less about the turmoil and injustice in the lives of hurting people around them.

Robert Bernhardt  
Green Bay, WI

Editor:

Thank you for printing Richard M. Gamble's demolition of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." I have long been offended and turned off by the hymn's text. But I did not know until reading the article that its author was a rabid Unitarian who was not at all rightly dividing the Word of truth. Presenting an inauthentic gospel, the "Battle Hymn" runs afoul of Galatians 1:8-9.

Andrew Margrave  
Fairfax, VA

## LETTERS

### FIERY GOSPEL

Editor:

Although I applaud the zeal of Richard Gamble to ensure theological truth in the songs sung in worship and to guard against a diluted or false gospel ("A Fiery Gospel," October 2018), I also believe that the worship of God in song and sermons is not intended to be sterilized from the current troubles of this world. Reflect on Amos 5:23: "Away with the noise of your

### WILSON'S "CHRISTIANITY"

Editor:

For all Woodrow Wilson's heralded "Christian" idealism and devotion to democracy and self-determination ("Woodrow Wilson," October 2018), his exalted view of the nature of man particularly meant the exalted nature of Caucasian man. (I cannot help but wonder if the secularizing progressivism he brought to Princeton University and later into politics wasn't steeped in the social Darwinism commonly taught in "modern" universities and colleges at the end of the

nineteenth century.) Right now, Wilson's racial views are at the heart of a movement at Princeton to erase his legacy. I'm not a fan of tearing down historic monuments, but the evils of our nation's past, often defended at the time as somehow "Christian," should be exposed and learned from.

David King  
St. Paul, MN

### A RANGE OF OPINION ON AQUINAS

Editor:

I offer two cautionary remarks about the October book review of Scott Oliphint's *Thomas Aquinas*. First, the review overlooks significant critiques of the book from some Reformed scholars. For example, prominent historical theologian Richard A. Muller identifies many substantial errors in Oliphint's reading of Aquinas—including mischaracterizations of Aquinas's conceptions of reason and revelation. Second, OP ministers such as Carl Trueman and David VanDrunen have argued that it is appropriate for Protestant Christians to retrieve portions of Aquinas's theology for today. Readers of *New Horizons* who wish to study a theologian as prolific and contested as Thomas Aquinas would do well to remember that there is a range of opinion on the value of his theology even within the OPC.

Nathan L. Cartagena  
Wheaton, IL

### HOSPITALITY AND EVANGELISM

Editor:

Thank you for Rebecca Sodergren's excellent review of Rosaria Butterfield's excellent book, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, in the November issue. Before I read the book, I was convinced that hospitality is important to foster Christian fellowship and mutual edification. But Butterfield broadened my horizons. She sees "radically ordinary hospitality" as a chief means to more effective evangelism. The appropriate response to our post-Christendom setting, she urges, is living as the

welcoming Christian community that our triune God calls us to be in Christ. Evangelism, then, should not usually be something that we tack on to our lives as an extraordinary endeavor. Instead, we should let our light shine in the callings and stations in which God has put us—to our family, to our neighbors, to our colleagues, etc.—in the context of true Christian community. I highly recommend this book.

Larry E. Wilson  
Jenison, MI

## REVIEWS

***Why Can't We Be Friends? Avoidance Is Not Purity*, by Aimee Byrd. P&R, 2018. Paperback, 243 pages, \$11.50. Reviewed by OP pastor Jonathan L. Cruse.**

Aimee Byrd's latest work takes up the subject of friendship between the sexes with thorough research, compelling argumentation, and an irenic tone.

The book is divided into two main sections, the first answering why non-romantic, God-honoring, male-female friendships seem to be an impossibility. Several reasons are addressed: issues of misplaced identity, misunderstanding purity, and allowing a fear of "what if" to control our behavior and practices. She also opens our eyes to pop culture's influence on the church—from Freud to Billy Crystal! Hollywood, Byrd argues, has been consistently teaching us that "all women are ... a means of sexual gratification for men, [and] that a man cannot control himself from thinking about conquering every woman he is 'friends' with" (23), and the church has bought into this as well. Our wariness of male-female friendships in many respects is no different from how society has oversexualized them, she claims. "To view the other sex as constant temptations to sin and threats to purity merely perpetuates the thinking and behavior of the unredeemed" (38). Has it always been this way? The his-

torical background that Byrd impressively weaves in throughout the book would suggest otherwise.

It must be noted that Byrd repeatedly reminds her readers that she is not advocating for frivolous or inappropriate relationships between the sexes. She does not want spouses to enter into friendships that make their partner uncomfortable. Instead she argues for "sanctified common sense" (92) in our male-female friendships. Certainly purity is a commendable goal, but, Byrd asks, "is 'purity' a worthy accomplishment when it separates one from the joy of Christian fellowship?" (65).

Ultimately, Byrd wants us to recover a biblical conception of friendship, which she says is best understood as a "sacred siblingship" (145). The chapters on what it means to be siblings in the Lord are strengths of the book, and make up the majority of Part 2: "How Do We Live as Sacred Siblings?" Chapter 9 hones in on the church and offers suggestions on how we can cultivate an ecclesiastical environment that fosters healthy relationships. Chapter 10 reminds us to grow in holiness with one another, and chapter 12 to celebrate and suffer together.

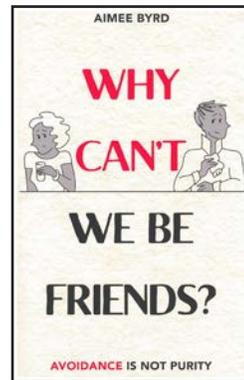
But in terms of male-female friendships, Byrd still thinks we can do more.

She is not shy in decrying the so-called Billy Graham (or Mike Pence) Rule:

Mature people seek table fellowship regularly," she writes. "They don't plot to be alone with the other sex just for the sake of it, but they also shouldn't be suspect if they share a meal with a man or woman. The blessing that Christians pray for before sharing a meal sets the dynamic at the table and invites their Lord to be with them" (195).

Byrd even makes the point that our shared meals with fellow believers are proleptic of the eschatological feast to come (190).

Let's be honest: in our Christian circles, a book like this could be somewhat controversial. It would be easy to dismiss it outright, since many of us already have



strong convictions on this subject. But if you are at all concerned about the topic, then read this book and hear Byrd out with discernment and charity. Even if you end up disagreeing on some points, you will learn a lot. I know I did. My theology of friendship (if I even had one) expanded. My understanding and love for the church deepened. And I finished this book encouraged, equipped, and determined to be better at loving my brothers and sisters in Christ.

***Descriptions and Prescriptions: A Biblical Perspective on Psychiatric Diagnoses and Medication*, by Michael R. Emlet. New Growth Press, 2017. Paperback, 112 pages, \$13.99. Reviewed by OP pastor Daniel F. Patterson.**

The church has long been polarized over the issues of psychiatric diagnoses and the use of psychotropic medication. At one end, there are those who treat diagnosis and medication as the lion's share of the work that needs to be done in the care of souls. On the other extreme end, there are those who seek to constantly undermine and minimize the helpfulness of descriptions and prescriptions for mental illness.

Into this highly polarized environment, Michael Emlet brings biblical balance and insight. In fact, Emlet's treatment of these topics gives one hope that larger sectors of the church are moving away from a highly reactionary stance toward psychology and psychiatry to a more balanced, thoughtful place. This is not to say that Emlet embraces an unfettered acceptance of secularized psychological theory and practice. Far from it. However, he is unwilling to categorically deny the helpfulness of descriptions of mental illness provided in a resource like the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* or the benefit of psychoactive medication.

*Descriptions and Prescriptions* is divided into two parts. The first addresses the benefits and limits of psychiatric diagnosis. Several of the chapters warn the reader of the problems and pitfalls of psychiatric diagnosis, reminding us that "the diagnostic task, whether using biblical categories or secular ones, is never like following a simple recipe. Wisdom

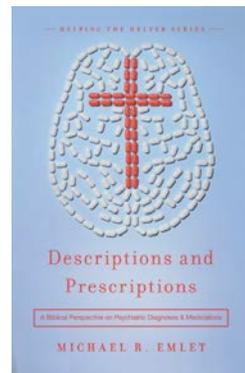
is key" (42). However, from here Emlet goes on to explain a number of benefits to the wise use of diagnosis: it can "organize suffering into categories that prompt focused attention" (43), "remind us that this person's experience is indeed different from mine" (45), "suggest certain patterns of severity and danger" (46), and "remind us of a more central role of the body in a person's struggle" (47). It is this sort of balanced approach to diagnosis that the church today desperately needs.

The second section provides the reader with an understanding of psychoactive medications, including their benefits and limitations. Emlet tempers our culture's enthusiasm for a chemical cure for mental illness by highlighting a number of studies that remind us that, while medication does seem to have a modest effect, other forms of care and counsel have also been shown to be effective. Emlet summarizes the questions surrounding the use of medication in the title of chapter 14, "Walking the Wisdom Tightrope." He reminds us, "It is

## Position Available

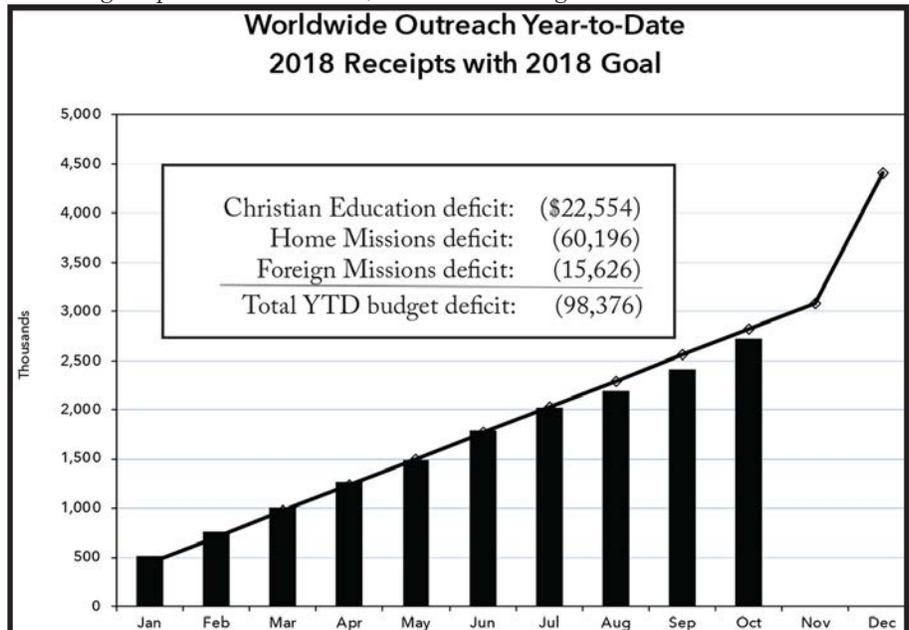
**Pastor:** Living Hope OPC in Allentown, Pennsylvania, is seeking a full-time pastor. We are a suburban church located in the beautiful Lehigh Valley. The successful applicant will be experienced in preaching expository sermons, appreciate wonderful congregational singing, and be an outgoing apologist for the gospel and Reformed theology. Send inquiries to [LHOPC.PSC@gmail.com](mailto:LHOPC.PSC@gmail.com). View our website at [www.livinghopeopc.org](http://www.livinghopeopc.org).

profoundly dehumanizing to ignore the 'heart'—our moral-spiritual disposition and responsibilities that go with that; and it is profoundly dehumanizing to ignore the body and the strengths and weaknesses that go with it" (71).



If you find yourself opposed to the use of psychological diagnosis and psychoactive medications, buy this book and read it. It will challenge you to rethink such a rigid stance. If you find yourself readily accepting of descriptions and prescriptions, buy this book. It will help you to be more circumspect in your confidence. Emlet will

not let us be content with shallow thinking on either end of the debate. He wants to bring us to the biblical middle.



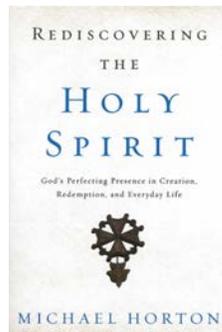
NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS *Continued*

***Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God's Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life*, by Michael Horton. Zondervan, 2017. Paperback, 336 pages, \$15.54 (Amazon). Reviewed by OP pastor Ken B. Montgomery.**

“Let’s start at the very beginning, a very good place to start” (from *The Sound of Music*). Michael Horton suggests that by “introducing the Holy Spirit too late in the story—at the application of redemption—we miss much of the action” (47). In the creation narrative (Gen. 1:2), we find the “Lord and giver of life” (Nicene Creed) hovering over the dark waters, as he “broods with ... bright wings” (Gerard Manley Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur”). The Spirit is pleased to showcase God’s goodness through the vitality and fecundity of the created order, so the gifts we reap here below on earth are in every case to be traced “from above” (James 1:17).

Throughout his presentation, Horton exemplifies the skill of the kingdom scribe “who is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new

and what is old” (Matt. 13:52). The Holy Spirit who was at work in the craftsmanship of the wilderness tabernacle (Ex. 31:3) was preparing God’s people for the Spirit’s part in building the final tabernacle of the Lord in the flesh of Christ (John 1:14, 21). “Not only did Christ give us the Spirit; the Spirit gave us Christ” (42).



In a further explanation of this point, Horton writes: “All along it was the Spirit hidden behind the scenes who kept the promise moving forward, over the deep trenches and barbed

wire that human beings had placed in his path, preparing a body for the Son from the flesh of Israel” (85).

I found the discussion on the Spirit’s role in divine judgment and witness especially valuable. In the exodus, the Spirit “stands in the witness pillar and in the judgment cloud to judge as well as to defend” (112). The resurrection of Jesus involves the judicial act of the Spirit (Rom. 1:4), as the death sentence for Christ is reversed and the last-days verdict of justification is pronounced, resulting in life for

the new Adam and his sons.

Herman Bavinck states in *Reformed Dogmatics*, “After the creation and the incarnation, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the third great work of God.” Horton likewise sees the watershed significance of the Spirit’s forming and filling on this new day of history: “At Pentecost, however, a new creation dawns with the Spirit once again transforming chaos into cosmos. From the rubble he will build not a restored temple of stone but a living sanctuary consisting of ‘living stones’” (225).

The pace of Horton’s prose is neither too slow (belaboring the point) nor too fast (zooming past important matters). He engages the reader partly by interacting with many conversation partners throughout the book, and students of theology will appreciate his readiness to remind us of the keen insights of Reformed luminaries such as Owen, Warfield, and Kuyper.

Anselm wrote, “I believe in order to understand.” Christians believing in the Holy Spirit (“be-living” in him!) and seeking a doxological understanding of his person and work will almost certainly be edified by reading this work.



**Hurricane Florence is long forgotten.  
Unless you live in North Carolina.**

Contact David Nakhla to find out how you can help OPC  
Disaster Response relief efforts.

562-760-7606  
David.Nakhla@opc.org